

Washington bureau

By Luther A. Huston

GANNETT NEWS SERVICE

Gannett Newspapers Washington Bureau serves 53 newspapers, at latest count, from Burlington, Vermont to Guam. Its twelve-man staff provides a news report that averages 8,000 words a day and may include stories on the fuel oil situation, of interest to New England; on land use, of interest to Boise, Idaho; or on strip mining, of interest to the two papers in West Virginia; and the Watergate, of interest to everybody.

Reporters in the bureau do not work for a single newspaper in the group but all of them keep an eye out for any news that might interest any newspaper or group of papers in the sixteen states wherein Gannett owns papers. The bureau's "game plan" is not to duplicate spot coverage afforded by the news services, but to give special coverage on major national stories, analytical and interpretive, designed to give readers a comprehensive but not confusing picture of what is going on in Washington.

Although the staff doesn't boast investigative reporters as such, it sometimes digs up exclusive angles on things like the Watergate while watching day-to-day developments.

Five of the seven members of the Ervin subcommittee probing the Watergate are from states where Gannett has papers. Two Gannett staffers cover the Watergate hearings and one of them, Don Campbell, gives special attention to what they say and do. Jack W. Germond, chief of the Washington bureau, analyzes the hearings and does color stories.

Two writers on politics

Germond, who has headed the bureau since 1969, also writes about politics, regional or national, as does Peter Behr, assigned to the White House. Behr also is the bureau's economics specialist.

Four men are assigned to Congress. Campbell specializes in tax reform, John E. Simonds watches labor legislation, Jer-



CHIEF OF GANNETT Washington bureau Jack Germond goes to work on a story. (Photo by U.S. News Service Photos).

ry Moskel keeps up with what is going on in the area of farm and John Omicinski serves as sort of a swing man, doing single articles and series on special subjects. A responsibility of the Congressional staff, of course, is to keep in touch with Congressmen from the areas where Gannett has papers and, with sixteen states, some with large delegations, to keep track of, they are kept busy.

William M. Ringle covers the Supreme Court and general assignments, like organized crime and President Nixon's trip to Peking. At the court he covers orders and decisions of interest to a particular paper, filing direct, and this sometimes means that, in addition to an interpretive story on such decisions as the recent obscenity cases, he produces a batch of items for single papers in the Gannett chain. On busy days at the high court he is a busy man.

Other beats

Lee Hickling has a wide ranging beat which includes science, space and some regulatory agencies and Carol Richards does general assignments and specializes in educational news.

Two columnists write from the bureau. The best known is Jack Bell, who came to Gannett from the Associated Press some years ago, and writes three columns a week on national and international issues. The extent to which the bureau

utilizes all of its manpower is shown by the fact that Marion Martin, who is office manager, also writes a weekly consumer column.

Except for the occasional item filed direct to a single newspaper, the Washington bureau's news report goes to Rochester, home office of the chain, on a Scanatron fax machine. From Rochester, the bureau's copy is distributed to the papers over a 24-hour TTS circuit. Editors in Rochester select the Washington stories that are sent on the wire.

The Washington bureau was opened in 1942 and has operated since then from offices in the National Press Building. Before Germond, the bureau chiefs were Cecil Dickson, A. Vernon Croop, Paul Martin and Robert W. Lucas. The policy is to promote men from Gannett papers to the bureau.

Considering the nature and extent of its journalistic responsibilities, the Gannett News Service, the official name of the bureau, probably covers a broader field and serves more papers than any other in Washington, with the exception of the wire services, and does it with a smaller staff.